

How Parents Can Help Their Teens Become Safe Drivers



**The Connecticut Department of Motor Vehicles
Waterbury, Conn.**

A Message for Parents



For many teenagers –the people who use the Connecticut Driver’s Manual most - this is an exciting time. Getting their driver’s license is one of those first steps toward independence and becoming an adult. Here is a book for parents who are getting ready to let those teenagers gain that independence. It is a manual that aims to give parents who will be sitting side-by-side their teenagers as they learn the written rules and unwritten rules of the road. The written rules in our driver’s manual can help refresh your memories if you haven’t read the book in a while. Safe roads are important to all motorists, but acting safe on the road starts with you and your teenager. At the DMV we believe that these suggestions, which are on our written exams and observed on our road tests, give teenagers a sense of the responsibility expected when they get behind the wheel of any vehicle. We expect them through your guidance to develop a keen sense of awareness and self-discipline in their driving skills. Here are a few important reminders to pass along to them: Don’t drive recklessly – you endanger yourself and your passengers as well as other cars and pedestrians on the roads. Keep a level head and stay away from trouble when you know it can develop. Always buckle your seatbelt and don’t start the vehicle until all your passengers have buckled up. Remember that driving while impaired by drugs or alcohol is dangerous and against state law. Penalties for driving while intoxicated are severe and will be pursued by the Department of Motor Vehicles. Driving safely is one sure way to earn the respect of others and a reputation as a good driver. Good Luck and Safe Driving.

Gary J. DeFilippo
Commissioner
Department of Motor Vehicles

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Why You'll Want to Use This Guide

Teaching teenagers to drive takes time and patience. Not because they don't want to learn. They want that license as soon as they can get it. However, to get them familiar with all the situations they might face - and give them enough on-the-road experience to deal with each situation confidently and safely - takes many hours of instruction and practice.

That's why Connecticut now requires at least 8 hours of adult-supervised, behind-the-wheel training before taking the road test to qualify for a license.

If you've accepted the responsibility to be one of those supervising adults, you'll want to put those 8 hours to good use. This guide will help you organize that time - a suggested lesson-by-lesson approach to teaching your student how to handle a vehicle safely in a wide variety of situations. When more than one adult is providing instruction, each can use the guide to track what lessons have already been covered and decide what to review or cover next.

Reviewing these sections will also benefit you, as the supervising adult, by reminding you of actions that now come naturally to you and helping you communicate them. It is very important that you, as trainer, review the Connecticut Driver's Manual before beginning that lesson. Techniques and terminology may have changed from when you got your license. For example, following distance, right on red rules, hydraulic versus abs braking systems, K-turn or 3 point turn (they're the same thing).

Actual practice sessions should not last more than about an hour. Longer sessions can result in fatigue, which reduces the effectiveness of the instruction and increases the risks to you and your student driver.

After you've completed Lesson 6 (Driving on Limited-Access Highways), you should begin giving the student opportunities to practice driving with you in general situations not devoted to specific new situations or skills. This practice helps the student gain confidence before tackling later lessons devoted to driving at night and in bad weather.

In the back of this booklet is a log to record the date, amount of time spent, and what you practiced on each day. It also has a column to write in the hours you've logged so far, so you'll know how far along you are on the 8-hour requirement. You should include any time the student has driven with you on simple practice runs and trips between actual instruction sessions.

Once the total 8 hours is reached, you need to ask yourself not just whether you think the student can pass the official road test, but whether you honestly believe he or she has the skills and attitude to drive safely without supervision. Only when you can confidently answer "yes" to both questions should you allow your student driver to take the road test.

What to Remind Yourself

How well the training goes will have a lot to do with the way you communicate. Here are some basic guidelines for a positive learning relationship:

Stay calm, patient and positive. Don't overreact, shout or criticize.

It's difficult because your driving experience may have caused you to know first hand the dangers of black ice, being involved in an accident, etc. The new driver still is only drawing on abstract concepts, NOT actual experience like yourself.

This causes the new driver to feel a bit invincible (it will never happen to me) or treat situations less serious than they should be.

Don't assume that your student knows what you want done or how to do it. Describe the action to be taken as simply and clearly as you can. In some cases, you may need to demonstrate by taking the wheel yourself.

In the early lessons, as you approach intersections or deal with traffic, have the student tell you in advance what action should be taken. This lets you know if he or she is thinking ahead and planning the correct response.

Keep a sharp eye on what's happening on the road so that you can warn the student of potentially dangerous situations and explain what to do.

Emphasize the importance of constantly scanning the road for anything that will affect how you should be driving or reacting.

When you are driving, set a good example. Practice what you preach.

The Principles of Good Driving

Throughout the training, constantly emphasize what makes a good driver:

- Have a serious attitude toward driving.
- Understand the risks and how to avoid them.
- Know and follow the rules of the road.
- Respect the power of vehicles.
- Always drive safely and responsibly.
- Always wear the seat belt.
- Look out for what other drivers are doing.
- Stay within speed limits, and drive at a speed that is safe for conditions.
- Follow other vehicles at a safe distance.
- Know when and how to move safely into traffic.
- Communicate intentions to other drivers.
- Show courtesy to other drivers.
- Never drive while under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

Lesson 1 - Controls, Gauges and Maintenance

Don't take it for granted that your student knows how to operate all the pedals, switches, buttons, and other things that control the vehicle...or how to read the instrument panel.

With the student sitting in the driver's seat, explain how it all works - from adjusting the seat and mirrors to operating the gearshift, brakes, headlights, hazard lights, defroster, and wipers. Have the student actually operate everything, including those controls that only work when the motor's running.

Remind your student to always use the seat belt, even if the car has an air bag. They are meant to work together, since an air bag alone won't keep you in the seat if there's a crash. Have the student adjust the seat so he or she is as far as possible from the air bag to avoid injury, but still able to comfortably reach the pedals and other controls.

To protect against whiplash, the adjustable headrest should be moved so that the top of the restraint is slightly above the driver's ears or at the back of the head - not at the base or curve of the neck.

Teach your student how to adjust the sideview mirrors to minimize blind spots. The best way to do this is to shift your gaze (while in normal driving position) toward the mirror being adjusted and adjust it so that the side of the car is just visible when you look into the mirror.

Go over the instrument panel and what each gauge means. You may want to refer to the vehicle's owner's manual to be sure you've covered everything.

At a service station, demonstrate how to fill the gas tank and add air to the tires. Show how to open the hood and where to check the oil and other fluid levels. Point out the location of the spare tire and the tools for changing a tire. Even though your student might be asking a service attendant to do these things, it's important that he or she knows where everything is and how it's used.

Lesson 2 - Learning the Basics

The best place to begin teaching the student how to drive is a big, empty parking lot. The lines on the lot can be used to represent roads, curbs, and parking spaces as you go over these basic moves:

- Coordinating brakes and gearshift while starting the engine.
- Operating the gearshift once the engine is started. (With stick-shift vehicles, it will take more practice time to learn how to use the clutch and shift gears without stalling.)
- Holding the steering wheel properly.
- Slowing the car by using the foot brake or just taking the foot off the gas pedal.
- Moving the car forward and stopping.
- Making partial turns.
- Driving in reverse (Backing to the right - turn the body to the right to look behind while steering with the left hand).
- Making left- and right-hand turns. (Get them in the habit of using the turn signal for all turns.)

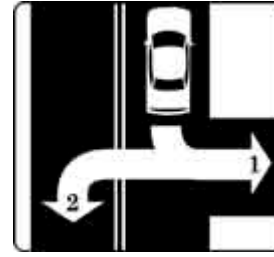
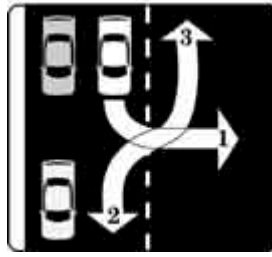
There are two ways to use the steering wheel to make a turn. In the "hand-over-hand" (safer for high speed) method, the driver reaches across the steering wheel to grasp the opposite side and pulls the wheel over the top, repeating as needed.



In the "push-pull" (only preferable at slow speeds) method, one hand pushes up on the steering wheel while the other hand slides to the top and then pulls the wheel down, repeating the action until the turn is complete.

- Turning around: U-turn, three-point turn (also known as a K-turn) and two-point turn (all seen below).

- Entering and backing out of a parking space.
- Backing into a parking space.



Lesson 3 - Driving in Limited Traffic

Once the student has gained skills in the basic maneuvers in a parking lot, move to lightly traveled, two-lane residential streets or country roads where the speed limit is no more than 35 mph. Choose roads where there are intersections with and without stop signs, with and without traffic lights, and where there will be oncoming traffic and cars parked along the street. A list of instructions for each of these situations follows.

In these early lessons, it's very important to teach effective search and scanning habits: where and when to look, what to look for, and how to properly interpret what you have seen.

Driving down the road

- Check in all directions before driving out onto the road.
- Move steadily down the road, keeping a "cushion" of space around the car.
- To keep a safe distance from the car ahead, practice using the minimum "two-second rule" for ideal road conditions. A four-second following distance should be observed in certain situations such as on slippery roads or when following motorcycles.
- Steer as though following an imaginary line down the middle of the lane you're driving in.
- Keep eyes mostly on the lane ahead, but pay attention to what any oncoming vehicles in the other lane are doing.
- Keep looking about 12 seconds down the road (the distance of one city block) to give yourself time to make decisions and control your car. Look out for cars braking ahead, pedestrians near the curb, and children playing nearby. Check ahead for upcoming traffic signals or signs and anything blocking your view so you can brake or change lanes if necessary.

Approaching intersections with and without stop signs

- Slow down when approaching the intersection and be prepared to stop.
- Respond to a stop sign by slowing down gradually and making a complete stop. This will control following traffic, minimizing chances of rear end collisions.
- Look left, right, and left again for cars approaching on the side streets. This is extremely important to allow your brain to process what it sees.
- Watch out for pedestrians and yield to those on crosswalks.

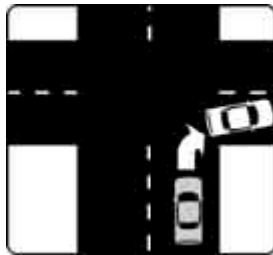
- Yield the right-of-way to cars or cyclists already in the intersection.
- Look to be sure the intersection is clear of pedestrians and cross traffic before proceeding through it. If the view is obstructed, pull forward until it's not - then go ahead when the intersection is clear.

Approaching intersections with traffic lights

- Approach the intersection ready to brake - even if the signal is green. If it's yellow or red, gradually come to a stop.
- Look for signs such as "No Turn on Red," "No Turns," "Wrong Way," and "One Way."
- Keep a safe distance behind the car ahead. One-half to $\frac{3}{4}$ of car length when stopped.
- Look left, right and left again before proceeding through the intersection when the light turns green.
- Yield if necessary to oncoming cars making left-hand turns in front of you and pedestrians crossing the street.
- Be sure there's enough room for your car at the other side of the intersection if traffic is stopped up ahead.
- Be sure there's an open path for the car when making a left- or right-hand turn.

Making right- and left-hand turns

- Activate the turn signal at least three seconds before the turn.
- Check mirrors for traffic coming up from behind.
- For right turns, drive toward the right side of your lane as you approach the intersection (as seen below).



- For left turns, position the car as close to the center line as possible in your lane, stopping if necessary to allow oncoming traffic to pass. Keep the wheels straight while waiting to turn. (See example below)



- Be sure there is open space in the road you're turning onto.
- Go into the turn slowly, using hand-over-hand steering. Accelerate gradually while rounding the turn. Then straighten the wheels and resume speed.

Driving on curves and hills

Stretches of rural or suburban roads with a lot of hills and curves offer a different set of challenges. With little traffic and few traffic signals, it's tempting to pick up speed and cruise along as though there were no hazards ahead, when actually, those curves and hills can be concealing dangerous situations created by other vehicles, hidden driveways, animals, and other obstacles on or near the road.

That's why you should find an area with curving roads and hills that allows your student to practice dealing with these situations.

As you approach a curve, instruct the student driver to driver to:

- Reduce speed. (A sharp curve or slippery roadway will require the most reduction in speed.)
- Driving too fast on a right-bending curve causes the car to move to the oncoming lane.
- Driving too fast on a left-bending curve causes the car to move toward the curb or worse, off the road.
- Driving too fast on a right-bending curve causes the car to cross into the oncoming opposite lane or off the road on the opposite side of the street.
- If there are no oncoming vehicles, stay in the center of your lane.
- If there is an oncoming vehicle, stay slightly to the right side of your lane. This will help prevent a crash if the opposing driver drifts over into your lane.
- Continue to look around the curve, maintaining proper lane positioning.

As you approach a hill, instruct your student driver to:

- Keep close to the right edge of your lane.
- Accelerate gently to maintain speed.
- At the top of the hill, search over the crest as you go and be prepared to react to an unseen hazard.
- Upon reaching the top of the hill, look for hazards such as pedestrians on the road or shoulder and vehicles entering the road from driveways, backed up at a traffic light, or stopped for some other reason.

When there's a traffic signal or stop sign on the other side of the hill, there may be a yellow or flashing sign to warn you. If so, put your foot up to the brake pedal when you reach the top of the hill so that you're prepared to stop quickly.

Review sessions

As you have additional sessions on lightly traveled roads, reinforce good driving skills by reminding your student driver to:

- Constantly scan the roadway far ahead and to the sides.
- Continually check the rearview and side mirrors.
- Make smooth gradual starts and stops.

- Drive within the speed limit.
 - Keep your speed consistent.
 - Keep the car correctly positioned in the lane.
 - Make turns properly by:
 - Signaling in advance,
 - Braking gradually,
 - Checking mirrors,
 - Starting turns at the correct point,
 - Not turning too wide or cutting into the wrong lane, and
 - Maintaining the proper speed.
 - Respect the potential dangers of driving around curves and over hills.

Lesson 4 - Handling the Vehicle in Traffic

Now you're moving on to routes with a mixture of neighborhood streets and commercial areas, including roads that have four lanes and designated turning lanes. Speed limits should be no higher than 40 mph.

Here are the basics you'll be talking about and practicing on these roads.

Speed control

You should emphasize to your student driver again and again that driving within the posted speed limit is not just to avoid being stopped by the police, but to avoid creating dangerous situations. They also need to understand that driving safely often requires driving below the posted speed limit to adjust for road, traffic, or weather conditions.

Driving too fast can cause you to:

- Not have time to react to an unexpected action by another vehicle, cyclist, pedestrian or animal, or...
- Lose control of the car because of a sudden change in the road.

As you take these drives in traffic, have the student concentrate on maintaining a safe, consistent speed, thinking about when he or she should be accelerating, braking, or allowing the car to coast. New drivers tend to lose speed going up hills and race going down, so hills are a good place to practice speed control.

Instruct the student to slow down when going through an intersection, coming to a sharp curve, or getting ready to turn onto another road. (But be sure not to slow down too much before turning off a high-speed road since this can cause trouble with a vehicle traveling full speed behind you.)

Yielding the right-of-way

Remind your student that a yield sign tells you to stop or slow down to give the right-of-way to other vehicles or pedestrians. When approaching a yield sign, the driver should:

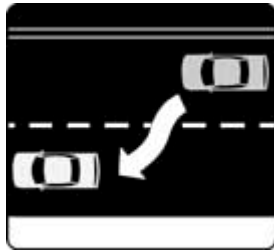
- Put on the turn signal.
- Slow down.
- Check for traffic or people and, if necessary, stop.
- Turn to look behind and use the side view mirrors to check blind spots.

- Wait for a long, safe break in the traffic.
- Merge into the correct lane.

Changing lanes, passing, and merging

Following are the basic steps to practice in moving left or right into another lane, for whatever reason. Here are some additional tips:

- Check your blind spot in the lane you're moving into by turning your head and looking in the side view mirror. In most lane-changing crashes, the driver didn't check both ways and traffic was passing through blind spots.
- When positioning your vision to check the blind spot, do it quickly, so that you can look ahead again to see if you can still make the move.
- Check for other cars signaling to move into the same spot you want. (See below)



- Avoid unnecessary lane changes. Some drivers pass constantly, weaving in and out of traffic, thinking they'll "get there faster." Studies show this saves only a few minutes per hour and greatly increases the chance of a crash.

Always:

1. Check the inside and outside rearview mirrors.
2. Glance over your shoulder to check the blind spot.
3. Signal the direction you'll be moving.
4. When clear, steer toward the other lane.
5. Accelerate or slow down as needed to enter the other lane.
6. When reaching the other lane, steer to go straight.
7. Be sure your turn signal is off.
8. Adjust speed to traffic flow in the new lane.

Making turns at multi-lane intersections controlled by lights or signs

Even if you have to travel some distance to find one, your student driver should be instructed in how to deal with the lanes, signals, and signs that control turns in high-traffic areas.



When approaching major intersections, the driver needs to look ahead to answer these questions:

- Are there any traffic lights?
- Where are the intersecting roads?
- What lane should the car be in to make the turn?
- Are there special turning bays or lanes that change to "For Turning Only"?
- If there are no traffic lights or stop signs, which of the cars approaching the intersection should go through first, second, etc.?
- Are cars turning from the right across your lane, clipping the turn into your lane space?

Making left turns at intersections with lights or signs:

- At a standard green-yellow-red light, make the left turn only when your light is green and there's a safe gap in the oncoming traffic, which has the right-of-way. Sometimes there's a sign that says, "Left Turn Yield on Green."
- Where there is a light with a left-pointing green arrow, turn left only when that arrow is green. Although your turn is "protected" from other traffic, look out for pedestrians or vehicles that may be ignoring their light

Making right turns at intersections with lights or signs:

- Even when the light is green, look out for traffic turning left from the oncoming lane.
- Unless there's a sign that says "No Turn on Red," in Connecticut it's legal to turn right even on a red light after coming to a complete stop - but only if there's no traffic coming from the left or across the street, or pedestrians in the crosswalk.
- It is NOT legal to drive several car lengths forward on a red light to reach the turn even without a sign.

Driving in the City

The driving task becomes more complex in the city. Your student will need to divide his or her attention between using the skills already learned (maintaining proper lane position, speed control, and a safe following distance) and looking out for potential conflicts. These could include:

- Slow-moving traffic with unexpected braking.
- Crowding from buses and other oversized vehicles.
- Pedestrians coming out between parked cars or crossing at mid-block.
- Doors opening from parked cars.
- Stopped traffic blocking intersections.
- Drivers trying to turn through congested lanes.
- Drivers running a red traffic-signal light.
- Uneven pavement and sudden changes in street conditions.
- One-way streets.
- Center lanes used for left turns by traffic going in both directions.
- Oncoming left-turning vehicles that block your view of through traffic when you want to make a left turn.

Lesson 5 - Parking

By this time, basic car control and backing skills should be well-established, so the student is ready to practice parking skills in a lot with other cars parked and moving around. During this lesson, remind your student to:

- Use the turn signals and watch for pedestrians and cars backing out of parking spaces.
- Be especially cautious around children, whose behavior is unpredictable.
- In parking garages you must be aware of height restrictions. Not noticing could cause damage to your vehicle or possibly cause personal injury.
- Pay attention to stop signs posted in the parking lot and painted stop bars on the pavement.

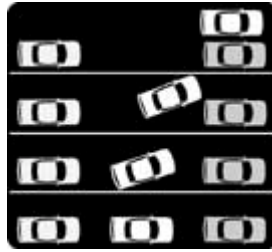
Here are the situations you should practice:

- Driving straight ahead into a parking stall.
- Turning into a marked space, both to the left and to the right. Keep as centered as possible between the lines.
- Backing out of the stall, turning to the right, and also turning to the left.
- Backing into a parking stall. (Since this is not easy, begin practice where the adjacent spaces are empty.)
- Repeat these maneuvers until you feel your student's driving is smooth and controlled.

Parallel parking

Parking on the side of the road in a space between two parked cars is tricky. Start this session off on a quiet street with cars parked along the side until your student is capable of practicing this with cars passing by. If there's no street with parked cars near you, you'll need to create this situation for practice.

Here's how to park in a space on the right of the road.



1. Put on the right turn signal and pull up parallel to and about two feet away from the car in front of the empty parking space. The rear end of the two cars must be even.
2. Check behind you for traffic, and shift into reverse.
3. While backing, turn the steering wheel sharply to the right.
4. As your front door passes the back bumper of the car next to you, quickly straighten the wheels and continue to back straight.
5. When clear of the car in front of the space, turn the steering wheel sharply to the left and back slowly toward the car behind.
6. Shift to drive forward. Turn the wheel sharply to the right and pull toward the center of the parking space. The tires should not be more than one foot from the curb.
7. Shut off engine and set the parking brake.
8. To pull out of the space, back up to make room in front and then turn the front wheels toward the lane you're moving into. Put on the turn signal to show you are pulling out.
9. Check the side view for cars coming up behind you and then move slowly into the traffic lane.

Also practice parallel parking in a space on the left side of a one-way street. The procedure is the same, except for the direction the steering wheel is turned. You should also practice parallel parking on a hill, where the foot brake must be used to help control the car.

Lesson 6 - Driving on Limited Access Highways

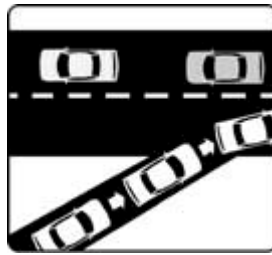
The first sessions should be during a non-rush hour time. This allows the young driver to get used to highways with entrance and exit ramps without having to deal with the heavy traffic that requires quicker reactions. Plan a route that allows getting on and off these ramps several times.

Your instructions for entering the highway should center on making full use of the entrance ramp in order to join the traffic at close to the same speed that it's moving on the highway.

1. While moving along the entrance ramp, turn on the turn signal.
2. Check the side view mirror and turn your head to look over your shoulder at the traffic coming up in the lane you'll be entering.

3. Look for a gap in the traffic while adjusting your speed to match that of cars on the highway. (Remember that the highway traffic has the right-of-way. Most entrance ramps have a yield sign to remind you of that.)
4. When you reach the middle of the ramp, look over your shoulder to see if there's enough room for you to move into the first lane of the highway without causing the vehicles there to slow down.
5. If there's no safe gap open, slow down or come to a stop until there's enough room to enter the first highway lane safely.

Safety Tip: When following another car on the ramp, pay close attention to its braking behavior. While you're looking behind for a safe gap to merge into, the car ahead might slow down or stop abruptly and cause a collision. When coming from a highway entrance ramp, don't pull directly onto the highway. Use the ramp to adjust your speed in order to find a safe opening in the traffic. (See below)



Exiting the highway is a matter of making sure you're in the correct lane well in advance and that the driver behind you knows what you're doing.

1. Move into the proper exit lane at least one-half mile before the exit. Don't wait until the last minute.
2. Signal at least 100 yards before you reach the off-ramp.
3. After entering the off-ramp, slow to the posted ramp speed limit. If you miss the exit, keep going and use the next interchange to turn around. Never back up on the highway.

Driving on a divided highway

As you practice driving longer stretches on the highway, remind the student to observe these principles:

- Keep up with traffic as much as possible without exceeding the speed limit.
- Don't get caught in large groups of cars driving close together.
- Don't stay in the far-left passing lane so that other cars have to pass you on the right. This is now against the law.
- Maintain at least a three- to four-second following distance.
- Don't stay in another driver's blind spot. Speed up or slow down into a position where you can be seen. This is especially important with tractor-trailer trucks, whose drivers can see behind only through their side view mirrors.
- When approaching on-ramps, if you're in the right lane, consider moving over a lane as a courtesy to cars merging onto the highway, but be sure the lane to your left is completely clear of traffic before you do.

- Use mirrors to keep track of what's coming up behind you.
- Keep lane-changing to a minimum.
- Watch the brake lights of the cars on the highway ahead of you. If you see traffic slowing, "tap" your brake pedal several times to warn drivers behind you to slow down, even though you may not need to brake yet.

Advise your student that the left lanes are for passing and faster-moving traffic. Unless you are passing or preparing to take a left-hand exit, the law says you must drive in the right lane of a two-lane highway. On a three-lane highway where there are many entrances and exits, the center lane is preferred because it presents the fewest conflicts. But if you're driving slower than the speed limit, stay in the right lane.

Lane changing and passing

1. While maintaining a safe following distance, check traffic ahead, behind, and to the sides.
2. Signal and select a gap in traffic into which you can merge safely.
3. Check mirrors and turn your head to check the blind spot.
4. Adjust speed if necessary and steer into the other lane.
5. When passing, speed up only to pass the other vehicle.
6. Signal to advise the driver you just passed that you're moving back into that lane.
7. Check mirrors and turn your head to be sure you're not cutting off the vehicle you just passed. Return to original lane when both passed vehicles headlights are visible in your rearview mirror.
8. Maneuver your vehicle into the lane while maintaining speed. After you've changed lanes, be sure your turn signal is off.

Two of the 10 most common causes of deaths involving 16-year-old drivers are driving over the speed limit and not compensating for a curve. Others are following another vehicle too closely and losing control of the vehicle.

Trucks and buses

Knowing how to share the highway with large vehicles is critical. Briefly:

1. Always be aware of the larger vehicle's blind spots. If you can't see a truck's mirror, the truck driver can't see you.
2. When possible, pass the larger vehicle on an upgrade, when it usually is losing speed.
3. Move over to the right slightly when it's passing you.
4. Don't "tailgate" (following the vehicle in front of you too closely).
5. Be alert to their turning and the space they need to do it.
6. Be aware of the extra distance they need when braking. (Never cut sharply in front of a truck or bus).
7. When approaching a school bus, drive with extra care, since children may run out of the bus or across the street. When a school bus is preparing to stop and its amber (yellow) lights begin flashing, you must prepare to stop. When the bus stops and its red lights are flashing and its stop arm is extended, you must stop at least 10 feet away from the bus, whether you are behind it, coming toward it on the same road, or approaching an intersection at which the bus is

stopped. Remain stopped until the red lights stop flashing, the stop arm has been withdrawn, and the children have reached a safe place.

Lesson 7 - Driving at Night

Explain to your student that there are three main reasons why driving at night is more dangerous:

1. Ninety percent of a driver's reaction depends on vision, which is severely limited at night. It's harder to make safe-gap judgments; notice pedestrians and bicyclists; and see curbs, medians, and roadway edges and markings.
2. Glare from oncoming headlights makes it difficult to see and temporarily blinds some people.
3. Most people are more tired at night, which slows their reaction time and concentration.

Night driving in neighborhoods and the city

During the first night practice sessions, return to the streets you drove on during the early daytime lessons. Review these points:

- Headlights should be turned on before the sun goes down. Even if they don't light up the road, they help to make your car more visible to other drivers.
- Use high beams only when oncoming drivers or a driver you're following won't see them.
- To compensate for reduced visibility, drive a little slower and at a greater following distance.
- Take extra care when judging distances at night. Landmarks used during the day are hidden after dark, and oncoming vehicles are just two points of light.
 - Although headlights from oncoming cars help light up the road, the glare can reduce your ability to see for a few seconds. Teach your student to reduce the glare by looking toward the right side of the road as the other car passes.
 - Show the student how to reduce headlight glare from cars behind you by flipping the rearview mirror.
 - Watch for things that reflect the headlights, such as:
 - Road signs that should be read.
 - Reflective striping or lane markings on the road.
 - A piece of metal or glass on the road that should be avoided.
 - Reflective striping on a bicyclist or pedestrian.
 - The eyes of an animal.
 - Watch for unusual movement or changes in contrast, such as:
 - A vehicle with its headlights off.
 - A pedestrian wearing dark clothes.
 - A dark spot in the road that might be a pothole.
 - A stop line painted across the road.

In commercial areas and in the city, traffic signs and signals are harder to see against a background of signs, store windows, and street lights. Have the student tell you when he or she sees traffic signs and signals.

Night driving on country roads

Try to find a country road (preferably one you practiced on during the daytime) that allows the student to experience real darkness.

- Remind the student that headlights do not follow curves, hills, and dips in the road. To compensate, reduce speed and pay special attention to the curve warning signs.
- Use high beams as much as possible, dimming them when approaching or following another vehicle.
- Since many country roads are marked only with a center line, the student will need to judge the edge of the roadway by noticing the difference in contrast between the pavement and the grass.
- Watch for pedestrians or animals on or near the road.

Night driving on limited-access highways

In practicing on these roads at night, point out these differences to your student:

- Entering and exiting the highway will be similar to the daytime environment since most of these areas have bright lighting. But watch for “Wrong Way” and “Do Not Enter” signs near these ramps, where many driving mistakes occur at night.
- In the non-lit areas of the highway, the white line is always on the right side of a lane, and the yellow line is on the left side.
- Maintain a safe following distance.
- Don't drive “beyond the headlights;” that is, don't drive so fast that you can't stop in time to avoid what the headlights show up ahead.
- Don't drive faster than the posted speed limit.
- Practice courteous use of high- and low-beam headlights.
- Glare from oncoming vehicles is a problem on highways not divided by a large grassy area or where there is nothing on the median to block the lights. The only way to reduce glare is to drive in the right lane of the multi-lane highway.

Lesson 8 - Handling Bad Weather and Emergencies

When the weather is bad, additional hazards are created by slick roads - visibility is poor, and there are other drivers who don't compensate for the poor driving conditions. Once your student has mastered previous lessons, you should have him or her practice driving in bad weather conditions whenever possible. At the minimum, you should thoroughly review these tips on how to drive in these conditions.

Driving on wet roads

- Turn on the wipers after the windshield is wet, selecting an intermittent, low, or high setting to keep the windshield clear.
- Turn on the low-beam headlights. This is the law, and it's good common sense since it helps others see you.
- Drive 5 to 10 mph slower than normal.
- Increase the following distance to five or six seconds.

- Be more cautious and slow down on curves.
- Wet leaves can cause loss of traction, so use caution when accelerating or braking.
- Avoid quick stops. “Pump” the brakes to slow or stop, unless the vehicle has an anti-lock braking system (ABS), which requires holding firm pressure on the brake pedal.
- Keep the defroster on to clear steamed windows. If you must make adjustments while on the move, make sure the road ahead is clear far ahead before looking down at the dashboard, and look away for only a second or two.
- When it's foggy, if your vehicle has fog lights, use them in addition to the low beams. (Don't use high beams because they reflect off the fog back into your eyes, causing glare and reduced visibility.) Slow down until your speed matches your ability to see, even if it means slowing to a crawl.
- In heavy rains, trucks produce splashing water that can completely obscure your vision, even when the wipers are at maximum speed. If you are passing or about to be passed by a truck, look far ahead and know exactly which way the road turns, since you'll be temporarily blinded for a few seconds. If you are doing the passing, accelerate gently, because too much power can cause you to skid. If the truck is passing you, ease off the gas until the splash is gone.
- If the water on the road is deeper than the tread of the tires, your vehicle may glide over the water. This is called hydroplaning. If you can see heavy water on the road and can't steer around it, slow down.
- If the road appears to be flooded, don't drive through it. As little as six inches of water can float some small cars, and two feet will carry away most vehicles.

One of the top 10 contributing factors in crashes involving 16-year-old drivers is driving too fast for conditions in rain, sleet, or snow.

Driving in snow

- Make sure the entire vehicle is cleared of snow and ice, since movement can cause snow to slide from the roof onto the windshields and obscure your view or fly off and strike other vehicles.
- With automatic shift, use the shift positions that are provided to move the car slowly without spinning the wheels. (See the car's operating manual.)
- With stick shift, use first or second gear.
- When starting in the snow, keep the wheels straight ahead and accelerate gently to avoid spinning tires.
- Decrease speed to make up for a loss of traction. On packed snow, decrease speed by half. On ice, slow to a crawl.
- Always accelerate and decelerate gently in snowy conditions.
- Be extra careful with braking. Stopping distances are about 10 times greater in ice and snow.
- Slow down the vehicle long before coming to an intersection or turn.

- Brake only when traveling in a straight line.
- Apply the brakes gently and release just before the brakes lock. Repeat this process with short pauses in between, to avoid skidding. (If your car has an anti-lock braking system (ABS)-see the instructions for braking under “Driving on Wet Roads.”)
- Keep a safe distance between your vehicle and those around you.
- Watch ahead for danger spots, such as shaded areas like the shady side of a hill and bridge surfaces that may be icy when the rest of the road is clear, or patches of “black ice” (where the road can be seen through a thin layer of ice.)
- When going uphill, stay far behind a car ahead of you so that you will not need to come to a stop or slow down, which can cause skidding.
- When going downhill, shift to a lower gear (even in an automatic transmission). Do this slowly to avoid skidding.
- If the vehicle skids out of control, take your foot off the accelerator and turn the steering wheel in the direction you want to go (toward the center of the lane) until you regain control.

Review what has to be done if stuck in a snowdrift. A shovel and a small bag of abrasive material (cat litter, sand, or salt) should always be kept in the car for such emergencies.

1. With the front wheels pointed ahead shovel out the snow in front of and behind each wheel, and from under the car.
2. Put the abrasive material under the tires for traction.
3. Put standard transmissions in second gear; automatics in low or drive.
4. “Rock and Roll.”
 - First, make sure no one is near your car.
 - With a standard shift, roll forward a little, step on the clutch, and roll back. Keep doing this, going a little farther each time, until the car is out.
 - With an automatic transmission, start in low gear and go forward as far as you can. Shift rapidly into reverse and back slowly as far as you can, but don't let your wheels spin. Shift back to low to go forward. Repeat these maneuvers in rapid succession, rocking the vehicle backward and forward until the car is free.
5. Once you get the car out of the drift, don't stop - but be sure the road is clear of oncoming traffic.

Recovering from a “drop-off”

Drop-offs are eroded shoulders of roadways. When the front wheel suddenly leaves the pavement and drops onto the shoulder and the shoulder is lower than the roadway by two inches or more, braking hard or turning sharply to re-enter the roadway can cause your vehicle to whip across the road, into oncoming traffic or rollover.

Since it's not advisable to practice an actual drop-off situation, you'll have to talk through what to do. These are the steps to follow if the front wheel drops off onto a low shoulder.

1. Ease off the gas pedal to slow down. Don't use the brakes unless you're headed for some obstacle, such as a bridge.

2. Steer parallel to the road and slightly to the right to keep the tires from scraping the edge of the pavement and throwing the car back across the road.
3. Continue to slow gradually to an extremely slow speed (less than 25 mph), until the vehicle is under control.
4. Check for traffic approaching in the lane you will re-enter and signal.
5. Gently ease the right wheels onto the pavement.
6. Straighten into the first lane and speed up to the flow of traffic.

Additional Practice and Straight Talk

Whatever additional hours of supervised driving are needed to complete the 8-hour requirement can be devoted to having your student do the driving on errands or trips.

This is when you can observe how the student handles a variety of traffic situations, some of which he or she may not have encountered before. These might include:

- Dealing with aggressive drivers by getting out of their way and staying calm.
- Sharing the road with tractor-trailers, bicycles, and motorcycles.
- Stopping for school buses.
- Avoiding pedestrians walking onto the road.
- Driving through work zones and tunnels.
- Handling rush-hour traffic.
- Passing on two-lane roads.

Remind your student that it's against the law for anyone under 21 to drink alcohol. Of course, any use of alcohol or drugs can create a dangerous situation for a driver and others. And if someone under 21 is caught with any measurable amount of alcohol in his or her system, it is considered "driving under the influence" and penalized severely.

Express your personal feelings about drinking and using drugs and what you expect. Tell your student that you're willing to help in any situation that might involve the risk of him or her either driving impaired or being driven home by someone who is.

Straight talk

By the time you have reached the end of the instruction period, you should be feeling comfortable with your student's ability to drive a vehicle. But you know that young drivers have a history of getting involved in crashes because of adolescent-related attitudes, high-risk behavior, and lack of experience. Pick a time when you and your student driver can talk about these issues.

Point out that competitiveness, aggression, inexperience, a sense of power and invincibility, and the temptations of independence are all influences that cause young drivers to drive dangerously.

For example, compared to other drivers, a larger proportion of teen fatal crashes involve going too fast for road conditions. Many of these involve only one vehicle, where the car leaves the road and overturns, or hits a tree or a pole.

In many cases, distraction caused by other teenage passengers is a key factor. Only a very small percentage of teens wear their seat belts compared to other drivers.

At night, crashes involving newly licensed drivers are mainly caused by alcohol, peer group pressure, lack of night driving experience, and fatigue.

Instruction Log

This log is a way for you, as a parent, to track with your teenager the practice sessions you both have done as part of the driver training with a learner's permit.

Area Covered	Time Spent
Controls, Gauges and Maintenance	_____
Learning the Basics	_____
Driving in Limited Traffic	_____
Handling the Vehicle in Traffic	_____
Parking	_____
Driving on Limited Access Highways	_____
Driving at Night	_____
Handling Bad Weather and Emergencies	_____
Additional Practice	_____

Instruction totaling _____ hours was completed between parent and teenager in preparation for taking the driver's test and the instruction was completed on _____.